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DEBRIEFING OF FRANCIS GARY POWERS

Tape: #14  
Date: 17 February 1962  
Time: 1604 hours to 1627 hours

Present: Mr. Powers



Interr-: Gary, when we finished the last tape, if you recall, we were talking about your trip from Vladimir to Moscow, of your experiences in Moscow, and we got you as far as getting aboard a twin-engine plane with the Colonel and the interpreter, crew and steward. Let's pick up the story from that point.

Powers: There's one thing that I thought about during the break. I believe I arrived in Moscow before lunch. I said after lunch, around one o'clock but I think it was probably about eleven o'clock - or between eleven and twelve. The mix-up, I think is caused because I arrived in East Berlin at one o'clock - local time there and I think that caused the mistake there,



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but got aboard the aircraft --

Interr-: Do you recall the name of the airport?

Powers: I never saw the name on anything or I didn't hear anyone mention it, but there were predominantly cargo aircraft and way in the distance I could see a great number of cargo aircraft - I don't know how many, but there was a line of them - it was a little foggy or hazy that morning and they disappeared into the fog or whatever it was. We took off somewhere around nine o'clock, maybe a little after nine o'clock - local time - Moscow time. It seemed to me - I was trying to judge by the sun and its course - but I never did know my directions there and the sun I think bears in the position it rises so much in the spring there that I might have been wrong but it seemed to me like we were flying too much south to be headed toward Berlin - but I don't know - there were several course changes. We had nothing to eat on the plane, arrived in Berlin - non-stop - at about one o'clock - local Berlin time.

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Interr-: Did you go to the airport?

Powers: No - saw no names there, but I counted twelve to sixteen helicopters. I didn't have the number, but I know it was more than twelve. I don't remember exactly how many it was.

Interr-: On the flight down, was the conversation general? Did they speak to you, did they have anything to say?

Powers: Yes, they talked a little bit, but not very much. They were reading and I read most of the way also -- this book that I had with me.

Interr-: All friendly though?

Powers: Uh-huh. It was completely friendly. In fact, there is something I missed - when the akoglov (? ph) and the interpreter left - the last time I saw them in Moscow - I heard the Colonel say something to me and they stuck out their hands to shake hands - the last time I saw them.

Interr-: Both the ak (? ph) and the interpreter?

Powers: And the interpreter. I never saw them again. Let's see - On the eighth we arrived in Moscow - On the

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ninth, at one o'clock in the afternoon - local time - we arrived - I would say - 50 kilometers outside of Berlin - as near as I can estimate. With a map of the area there I'm sure I can find the place. I was very close to the place. I remember a few names of the towns that were fairly near and the roads that we went on. It took quite awhile to get into the city, -

Interr-: By car?

Powers: By car - and they took me to a - looked like a private hom - had a nice dining room - looked like good china and crystal and a china cabinet.

Interr-: Was this a big house?

Powers: It was a two-story house - There was -

Interr-: Brick?

Powers: Brick.

Interr-: Red brick?

Powers: Yes, I think so - there was - you had to go through a gate - I don't remember what kind of fence was around it - there were some sort of fruit trees in the back yard - I may be able to - with a map of the

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city be able to show you pretty close to where it  
was - if I can get orientated on ---

Interr-: Was it a row house or separated from all other houses?

Powers: Oh - it was just in the city block - there was several  
feet over ~~the~~ to the next house - not just as close as  
that -

Interr-: It wasn't a row house then - it was a separate house.

Powers: Yes. There was a little hallway downstairs and a  
dining room - that was the only two places I was in  
downstairs. Went upstairs - there was a bedroom  
where the interpreter and myself slept that night. I  
don't know where this Colonel stayed - I think he  
stayed there, but he went out sometime - We were met  
at the airport and he was with this man who met us.

Interr-: Did you get the man's name who met you?

Powers: No, but I would know his photograph.

Interr-: In uniform or -- ?

Powers: No, civilian clothes - everyone had civilian clothes  
there except the guards and the two lieutenants that  
were in the house. There was one guard just inside

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the doorway and it appeared to me that there was only one entrance to the house and from what I could tell by looking out the windows and so forth it seemed that there was a guard on each side of the house with a - I guess you'd call it a tommy gun with a curved clip about - it looked about a foot long. The Lieutenant was carrying a pistol - that was the only one I saw - he was there when I first arrived and a little later on another lieutenant arrived - a first lieutenant I believe the rank was - both of them and they both stayed there all night and were there until I left the next morning. One of them set up all night also because the interpreter played some chess with him for awhile after I had went to bed.

Interr-: Which ~~interp~~ interpreter is this? This is the one you picked up in Moscow?

Powers: In Moscow - Yes.

Interr-: You don't have his name?

Powers: No.

Interr-: We'll try -- maybe he'll be in the pictures.

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**Powers:** But he has been in the states in 1939 - I know that - or at least that's what he told me - and the way that came up - he had a Gurelex (? ph) watch which he said was twenty-two years old that he had bought in New York - And I asked him if he'd spoke English then, and he said no - he'd studied English after that, so there might be someway to trace that.

Let's see, the Colonel came back - he was out most the afternoon - it seemed like or he might have just been downstairs -- I was not allowed to go downstairs. There was a bathroom across the hallway upstairs that I went into and just that room and the bedroom were the only ones I was in besides the dining room downstairs. It was - a - I hadn't eaten anything and didn't eat anything until supertime. That was a long day without food and the interpreter who was with me all the time had not eaten either so it wasn't intentional.

..... They got some food brought in from somewhere and a bottle of Cognac - set it on the table - the interpreter, the Colonel and myself ate together -- drank some of the cognac - he told me that - the

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next morning I was going to be released. This was the first time that I knew when it would take place and there was something about - I think ~~xx~~ something about a bridge mentioned - but I didn't know where it was - no, there wasn't - that was mentioned the next morning - nothing about a bridge that night. Nothing about procedure or what was going to take place. Part of the evening I spent after eating supper - I spent reading and someone had brought a chess board in later and I played two games of chess with the interpreter. He won both - I went to bed and he stayed outside and played with the Lieutenant for a long time - in fact, he woke me up when he came in and he probably only got a hour or two of sleep that night. It was very close to the time we had to get up. The door was open all this time, but they were sitting out in a little room right off the hallway.

Interr-: Remember if the windows had bars on them?

Powers: No, they had no bars on them, but they had these wooden slats that they pull up with a rope from the inside and let down and completely block off the view.

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They were up when I first got there and I could see outside and see the guard walking around to the back yard. It was a fairly big back yard and quite a ways to the nearest building out that way. At night they let those wooden slats down. Got up the next morning - ate breakfast again with the Colonel, the interpreter and myself and he told me at breakfast time the procedure that would take place. He said it would take place on a bridge; that we would go up the one side, the Americans would come up to the other side, that the negotiators - three from each side - would go out on the bridge and talk and I think that he said we would follow them out - and stay about ten yards behind them, ~~X~~ he said meters - approximately ten yards behind them. And - that whenever they reached some sort of an agreement - that someone from the American side would come over to me and said one of their men would go over to the American side. He didn't say what for - and I assumed that when the American came over and a Russian went over it was more or less

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a hostage type thing - that one had control of each of the other and there was no mention of any exchange or anything like that - and that was about it - shortly after breakfast ---

Interr-: At what time?

Powers: Let's see - the night before they told me this would take place at 7:30 - but I think we left at 7:00 and I thought it would be fairly close to where we were, but they must have just made a mistake in translating or in conveying the idea to me because it was to take place closer to 8:30 I found out later, because we were still driving at 7:30 - but it was shortly - I think it was 7:15 when we left the house there. We drove back along the same road that we came in on back toward the airport for quite a ways - for quite a distance - and at someplace along through there we turned off and went into Potsdam - I think it was. They arrived there a little early and I think we made about three trips around a three or four block area to kill time. They were laughing about

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it and the interpreter asked me if I knew what they were doing and I said I think so - just too early or something and he said - yeh. They went on down toward the bridge - still a little early - they pulled over and stopped for about three to five minutes - and we pulled up at the - on the East German side of the bridge approximately twenty-five after eight - local time. I think we were the first car there, but there was another car sitting, that appeared to be waiting close to where we were, and there was also a car following us. We pulled up, several other cars pulled in and I couldn't get out of the car - I had to sit there and a bunch of people started milling around. I saw an American Captain drive up to this side of the bridge - we were back from the bridge a little bit. They had to move one of the cars to let this man through. He was attache or something - he didn't look around or nothing - he set there and looked straight ahead until they opened the gate and he went through this ....pass to get across the bridge. I thought he might

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have something to do with the exchange, but he didn't.

Also, there was a British car and Britisher - I don't remember if he was in uniform or not - who came through.

**Powers:** It was just about 8:30 - maybe a little later - that an interpreter that was with this other group - probably the negotiators although he didn't go out on the bridge to negotiate with them - came up to me and asked me if I understood what the procedure was. I told him, Yes, I'd been told. He spoke very good English -- excellent English. He said he would run through it again and he told me the same thing - no - not exactly the same thing - that the three people who would negotiate would meet the three Americans in the center of the bridge and when they reached some sort of agreement they would signal for these two men to bring me up. I was still in the car all this time. He also said, Now, if you get out on the bridge, you'll be thirty feet behind the three men in front. If things do not come off, you are to come back with us, understand? And I said, Yes, I understand; but I

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don't know whether I would have or not. I can't really say, I don't think so. I would have jumped off that bridge or got across it somewhere.

Interr-: You'd have sprinted, huh?

Powers: I'd have gotten someway (?). We went out and they kept motioning us to come on and then to slow down. This happened two or three times - slow down - come on, slow down - come on until we got to approximately twenty or thirty feet behind these men and then stop.

This was the first time I had saw [ ] and I never was so happy to see anyone in my ~~life~~ life..

I didn't recognize [ ] as [ ] I recognized him by the position he held. I thought - I made up my mind

that he was [ ] when I first saw him. He was smiling and I smiled at him and he came up to the three Russians - I guess they were three Russians - standing there in front and I heard him say - he seemed to be a little angry - he said, well, can I go talk to him - something like that - and it seemed to me he grabbed one of them by the arm - I don't know - and

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they said, yes. He walked back to me and we shook hands, he asked me several questions - to identify myself and so forth. I think he was pretty well convinced that I was who I was anyways. He asked me - do you want the questions as well as I can ~~xxx~~ remember them? He wanted to know who he was first and I said [redacted] Then - that might have shook him up a little, I don't know - but he knew the association between the positions there. He asked me about my dog - I told him the name of the dog - he asked me who did the dental work on my teeth in Germany - I told him that - he asked me who went with me to get the dog or something like that - I don't remember the exact question - I told him that, how I took the dog back to Turkey and there were several more but I don't remember.

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Interr-: It was quite the routine of identifying yourself?

Powers: Yes. And of course, shaking hands never has missed. He was real glad to see me and I was real glad to see him. These two men who were standing beside me

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which was the Colonel and the interpreter who came with me from Moscow never said a word during this whole time and they had told me before that I could not leave their side until the Colonel turned around and shook hands with me. And we stood there and talked for awhile, [ ] and I, I don't know how long a time passed there and someone said something and it was all right to leave. The Colonel shook hands and I think I shook hands with the interpreter also, I'm not sure. [ ] and I walked back across the line passed the six negotiators in the middle. I didn't notice too much what was going on on the other side.

Interr-: Did you see Abel coming the other way?

Powers: No, not at this time. We got about thirty feet on the other side of the white line and we had to stop and wait there, but we walked over to the side of the bridge. I don't know why, I think we were suppose to stand in the middle and be diplomatic about this or something, but I guess the excitement for both of us kept us from doing it. [ ] mentioned that that was Abel and

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this was the first time that I knew that this was involved and I cannot understand why they didn't tell me because they knew that I would know very shortly after that.

Interr-: .....

Powers: Maybe he didn't know, but he surely did, surely. So I looked at Abel, standing back there, and I was real surprised at the way he looked - I had expected something different - I had not read too much about him, but I had heard some and that my Father had been trying to contact his wife and ~~MX~~ all this sort of stuff.

Interr-: Where did you hear that?

Powers: My Father wrote me that. He had written a letter to East Germany -- he had talked to Donovan. He told me he had written a letter to East Germany and was waiting on an answer and I don't know what all. I remember reading something about Abel's trial but I didn't pay too much attention to that or remember or didn't remember too much about it, but his appearance

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surprised me. Finally, it - [ ] still kept asking me questions occasionally of the identification type. Finally it was all over and we walked back to the end of the bridge and felt very good.

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Interr-: I would imagine.

Interr-: Before we stop this tape off, we, of course, will probably try to talk in greater detail later, but as you understand, we are attempting to get this narrative down so Washington will have it.

Powers: Well, there's one other thing - I don't know, it seems sort of unusual, strange or something - I didn't know who this man was, but one of the Russians -- I thought he was maybe one of the Americans at first because he spoke good English and it was the chief of the group there, Shishkin (? ph) came over and invited me to come back to the Soviet Union as a tourist or something like that. I don't remember exactly what I said. I might have said - I might come back as a tourist or something like that - I don't know - I didn't know who he was. I thought he was one of the

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Americans first because he spoke good English and -

Interr-: How could you identify him as ~~XXX~~ Shishkin?

Powers: Someone mentioned this later, the name - I think it was [ ] who told me who he was.

[ ] wasn't there, but I think it was he that mentioned that Shishkin had come up and invited me to come back. Someone mentioned it since I've been back - I don't remember who it was. Then, we waslked off the bridge.

Interr-: In retrospect now of the story that has been unfolded, is there anything that you would like to put with the narrative. We have covered it quite good in detail, but if there is anything that you would like to put in it, we can put it in now or we can just wait until you have had a chance to refresh your memory by going through these pictures and we have plenty time to go through this again and maybe look for certain things that might be of interest to us.

Powers: Well, I can't think of anything right now, but if you have any questions to ask that would bring something to mind, it ----

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Interr-: Well, I shall hold off on any questions right now because I am most interested in putting this narrative down on the tape. I might have some, [ ] and [ ] may have some, but it is advisable for us to conclude our narrative now -- so I am going to put this down as the end of Tape #14 and if we decide to add to it we can. I'm just going to stop now. For the present, this is concluding the discussion between Mr. Powers and [ ] on Tape #14. The time is now 4:28 P. M., 17 February.

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